



Testimony of Ethan Ruby

Founder and CEO of Theraplant

In Support of HB 5450, "AN ACT CONCERNING THE PALLIATIVE USE OF MARIJUANA"

Public Health Committee

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Sen. Gerratana, Rep. Ritter, Sen. Markley, Rep. Srinivasan and honorable members of the Public Health Committee, I am Ethan Ruby, Founder and CEO of Theraplant. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to you today.

Theraplant is proud to be one of four medical marijuana producers licensed by the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection. We are charged with the task of providing consistent, lab tested, medical quality Cannabis and we take that responsibility very seriously. We are dedicated to empowering patients with the highest quality medical cannabis possible. We are passionate about what we do and will never tire in our research to identify and produce new strains of cannabis and healthier delivery methods for the benefit of those individuals suffering from debilitating medical conditions. Our greatest driver in this noble cause comes from directly seeing and hearing from patients right here in this State that benefit from this medicine, especially without the horrendous negative side effects frequently associated with opioids and other pharmaceutical drugs. At the end of the day, we are passionate about improving the quality of life for patients and we have now been successfully doing so for over one year.

Our guiding principle has been and continues to be "Patients First, and Always." With that in mind, we would like to add our strong support for HB 5450, "An Act Concerning the Palliative Use of Marijuana."

We must begin by thanking Gov. Malloy and the Legislature for creating Connecticut's current Medical Marijuana Program by enacting Public Act 12-55. Kudos must also go to the Department of Consumer Protection for promulgating detailed and extensive regulations that are true to the directive set by the Legislature---namely, that in Connecticut, medical marijuana will be treated as a pharmaceutical medicine.

The Connecticut model, while still in its early years of maturing, has already been a success. Other states that are currently considering or are developing their programs are looking at Connecticut as a great model. You should be proud of that. We all should be proud of that.

There are other ways to measure success. With four medical marijuana production facilities, and 6 (soon to be 9) dispensary facilities, hundreds of excellent NEW JOBS have been created. Add to that the tens of millions of dollars of construction and other investments and it's easy to see that this program has already helped Connecticut's economy with much more still to come.

But by far the most important success has come in helping improve the quality of life for thousands of patients. These patients, now approaching 9,000, are your neighbors, friends and family members and your constituents. Each and every day we hear the stories of patients that are benefitting dramatically from the use of this medicine. A higher quality of life is returning to them as they can now function normally for the first time in years. This has also led some to find hope, where previously they dealt with crushing depression associated with a severe medical condition that now qualifies them to legally and safely obtain medical marijuana. A recent patient testimonial we received thanked us for our work and stated that she no longer has suicidal thoughts. We remember these testimonials and it serves to make us work even harder at what we do.

Passing HB 5450 will allow us to do even more to find cures and relief for those that are suffering from debilitating conditions and gives Connecticut the opportunity to receive national recognition for the research to be done in this State. This bill will finally open the door to allow much-needed medical research programs to commence. Under current law, medical marijuana producers have been unable to engage in research programs with hospitals, universities, or hospice facilities. We applaud Consumer Protection Commissioner Jonathan Harris for advocating for this piece of legislation to allow us to move forward in these critically important areas.

Finally, please consider this legislation in context with society's recent awareness of the scope and depth of the crisis of drug addiction and substance abuse. Each passing day brings news of our fellow citizens succumbing to Opioid and Heroin addiction. We simply must get a handle on this epidemic. There are many ways to do this and I know tremendous resources are going into that both here at the Capitol as well as in our communities. But one way to prevent a tragedy is to stop it before it gets started. We again applaud Commissioner Harris in recognizing that in cases where medical marijuana is effective in treating certain conditions, it often prevents the need for patients to go on, or stay on an opioid medicine. Those patients are then far less at risk of opioid dependence that can ultimately lead to a Heroin overdose.

For these reasons and many more, we at Theraplant voice our strong support for HB 5450. Now is the time for this bill to pass so that Connecticut can continue to lead the way for responsible medical Cannabis practices. We have demonstrated that this industry can be and is beneficial, and we ask for your assistance to continue our important work.

I respectfully ask for your support of this bill, and I thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.